

APPENDIX E

Descriptions of CD-ROM Products on the BTS Web Site

The BTS World Wide Web site, in addition to making some data sets directly accessible, describes other data sets that are available on CD-ROM. To facilitate users' ability to locate high-quality, relevant data, it is important that the brief descriptions of CD-ROM products follow a standardized format that is as informative as possible. However, the descriptions that BTS provides for its CD-ROM products in the "Products" section of its web site vary in their content, usefulness, and, in some instances, compatibility with information for the same product from other sections of the web site.

This appendix reproduces descriptions of selected BTS CD-ROM products from the BTS web site, pointing out examples of better and worse practice. A useful format may be one that organizes the specific items of information that are provided for each entry in the BTS *Directory of Transportation Data Sources* (see Chapter 3) under the general headings that are used in the web site descriptions of many of the data sets: What is it? What's in it? How can I use it? and Product format. Also, it is important to provide a contact name for additional information.

COMMENTARY ON CD-ROM DESCRIPTIONS

1990 Census Transportation Planning Package (CTPP)— Statewide Element

The description of the CTPP—Statewide Element CD-ROM has information under the following headings: What is it? What's in it? How can I use it? and Product format (see Figure E-1). The information provided on content is limited



What is it?

The *1990 Census Transportation Planning Package* (CTPP) CD-ROM is a set of special tabulations of 1990 census data tailored to meet the data needs of transportation planners. Tabulations also contain a wealth of general interest information on the work force by place of work. The 1990 CTPP is a continuation of the program established for the 1970 census and continued for the 1980 census in the same general format.

What's in it?

Statewide tabulations on the following:

- Part A...characteristics of persons, workers, and housing units by county, place of 2,500 or more (city, town, village, etc.), and county subdivision (where requested) of residence.
- Part B...characteristics of workers by county, place of 2,500 or more, and county subdivision (where requested) of work.
- Part C...characteristics of workers in journey-to-work flows between counties, places of 2,500 or more, and county subdivision (where requested) of residence and counties and places of 2,500 or more of work.

How can I use it?

- CTPP may be accessed using TransVU software which is provided separately with the CD-ROM. TransVU is a Windows application that provides both map and tabular views of CTPP data and simplifies extraction of CTPP tables into dBase, Lotus, and comma delimited or fixed format ascii text files. Users can select tables by summary level, by topic, by universe, or geographic location.
- Raw data may also be accessed directly by users with their own data manipulation software.

PRODUCT FORMAT: 1990 Census Transportation Planning Package is available on a set of 12 CD-ROMs for the entire United States from the Bureau of Transportation Statistics. Customers are asked to specify data for the states they require. TransVU software is provided on diskette with the CTPP CD-ROM.

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FIGURE E-1 Description of the CTPP—Statewide Element CD-ROM.

(e.g., “characteristics of persons, workers, and housing units”). There is no mention that the data are from a sample (the census long form), nor that the data on place of work involve geocoding address information provided by census respondents that may have significant levels of error. No contact name for additional information is provided.

1990 Census Transportation Planning Package (CTPP)—Urban

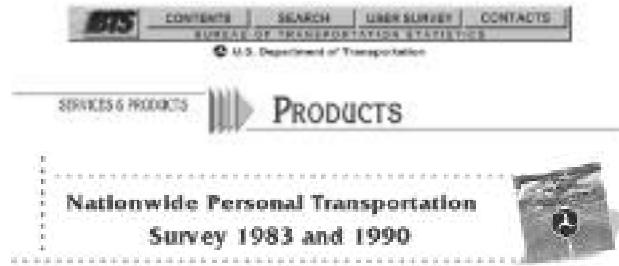
The description of the CTPP—Urban Element CD-ROM (not shown) follows the same format as the description of the companion Statewide CD-ROM (see Figure E-1). It is fairly informative with regard to content. However, there is no mention that the data are from a sample, nor of the average population size of the areas—traffic zones and census tracts—for which data are provided on this CD-ROM. There is no contact name for additional information.

Commodity Flow Survey (CFS), 1993

The description of the CFS that was on the BTS web site until late March 1997 followed the same format as the entries in the *Directory of Transportation Data Sources* (see Chapter 3). It had the following headings: Mode; Abstract (including an overview of the survey design and content); Source of data; Attributes (geographic coverage, time span of data, first developed, update frequency, number of records, file size, file format, media); Significant features and/or limitations; Corresponding printed source; Sponsoring organization; Performing organization; Availability; Contact for additional information. The description was quite complete, although the addition of information on response rates and publications would have made it more useful. The description was subsequently revised to use the following headings: What is it? What’s in it? How can I use it? and Product Format. In the revision (not shown), some useful information was not retained, although other useful information was added.

Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey (NPTS), 1983 and 1990

The description of the Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey has information under the headings: What is it? What’s in it? How can I use it? and Product format (see Figure E-2). The description is reasonably informative about content. However, it does not provide information about sample size or whether there is any identification of subnational geographic areas, such as regions. (The NPTS sample size of about 22,000 households is too small to provide much geographic detail.) No contact name for additional information is provided.



What Is It?

The *Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey* (NPTS) compiles national data on the nature and characteristics of personal travel by all modes of transportation. Information from a national household sample was collected about all trips taken during a designated 24-hour period (travel day). Additional details were collected for trips of 75 miles or further (one-way) that were taken during the preceding 14-day period (travel period) including the 24-hour travel day. NPTS data, which are collected by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration, are available for 1983 and 1990 on this product.

What's in it?

- Demographic characteristics of persons and households include such topics as relationship of household members, educational levels through graduate or professional school, income categories, etc.;
- ☐ Household vehicle availability and use;
- ☐ Annual miles per licensed driver;
- ☐ Household travel rates;
- ☐ Day-of-week and time-of-day travel;
- ☐ Vehicle occupancy; and
- ☐ Home-to-work trips.

How can I use it?

- To track, over time, both personal travel and the characteristics related to that travel for the entire nation.
- The *Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey* CD-ROM contains the Statistical Export and Tabulation System (SETS) software program, developed by the National Center for Health Statistics, that allows users to access documentation and data stored on disks or on a CD-ROM.
- SETS allows users to browse through and print documentation and data; build a table and query data; and, export documentation and data in dBase compatible (.DBF) format or SAS, SPSS, EPI Info, and BMDP formats.

PRODUCT FORMAT: *Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey* (NPTS) is available on CD-ROM from the Bureau of Transportation Statistics.

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FIGURE E-2 Description of the Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey 1983 and 1990.

Traffic Safety Data CD-ROM

The description of the Traffic Safety CD-ROM, which contains data from the Fatal Accident Reporting System (FARS) and General Estimates System (GES) of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), is only a brief paragraph (see Figure E-3). It informs the user that the CD-ROM includes an analytic reference guide that describes the comparability of the data over the evolution of the NHTSA programs. (However, none of the available documentation for the traffic safety data describes the collection methodology in detail or possible sources of errors.) No contact name for additional information is provided.

Previously, a somewhat longer description of the Traffic Safety Data CD-ROM was available that provided information under the following headings: What is it? What's in it? How can I use it? and Product format. This description is no longer linked to the "Products" section of the BTS web site; however, it appears when one follows the pathway through the National Transportation Data Archive section of the site to the entry for the Fatal Accident Reporting System Database, which contains a link to the CD-ROM description.



Traffic Safety Data CD-ROM

Traffic Safety Data CD-ROM contains the *Fatal Accident Reporting System (FARS) 1975-1994* and *General Estimates System (GES) 1988-1994* in ASCII format. These data are collected by the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Also included on this cd-rom are the *FARS Analytic Reference Guide 1975-1995*, a detailed reference source describing the comparability of data variables over the course of the survey's evolution. In addition, NHTSA's *Traffic Safety Report 1994* and *Traffic Safety Fact Sheets* are included on this CD-ROM and may be browsed using the on-disc Folio software.

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FIGURE E-3 Description of the Traffic Safety Data CD-ROM.



What is it?

The Bureau of Transportation Statistics's Transborder Surface Freight Dataset, available since April 1993, contains freight flow data by commodity type and by surface mode of transportation (rail, truck, pipeline or mail) for U.S. exports to and imports from Canada and Mexico. The data are processed and summarized for BTS by the U.S. Census Bureau on a monthly basis.

What's in it?

The Transborder Surface Freight dataset provides previously unpublished surface transportation data (other than air or maritime vessel) for U.S. import and export trade with or through Canada and Mexico. The dataset includes two sets of tables; one is commodity based while the other provides geographic detail.

The source data for import and exports are the administrative trade records required by the U.S. Departments of Commerce and Treasury. An increasing amount of import and export statistical information is now being captured electronically. For imports from Canada and Mexico, approximately 95 percent of the value of those imports is collected electronically via the Automated Broker Interface (ABI). For exports to Mexico, approximately 55 percent are collected through the Automated Export Reporting Program (AERP) where data are filed directly with the U.S. Census Bureau while the remainder are collected from paper export documents (Shippers' Export Declarations (SEDs)) that are filed with the U.S. Customs Service and processed by the U.S. Census Bureau. Exports to Canada are obtained through the U.S./Canada Data Exchange, under which the U.S. obtains the data Canada uses for its imports from the U.S.

How can I use it?

The Transborder Surface Freight Dataset is being used by a variety of organizations for a number of purposes, including the monitoring of freight flows and changes to these since the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) by the United States, Canada and Mexico in December 1993 and its entry into force on January 1, 1994. In addition, the dataset is being used by:

FIGURE E-4 Description of the Transborder Surface Freight Transportation Dataset.

- news organizations in reports;
- consultants in trade corridor studies;
- businesses in marketing plans and logistics studies;
- academic institutions in trade and transportation analyses;
- state and local government organizations for economic development studies and transportation and infrastructure planning purposes.

PRODUCT FORMAT: The Transborder Surface Freight Dataset is available at the Bureau of Transportation Statistics' Internet site.

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FIGURE E-4 Continued

Transborder Surface Freight Data

The description of the Transborder Surface Freight Transportation data set, which contains information on quarterly shipments between the United States and Mexico and the United States and Canada from unpublished customs data processed by the Census Bureau, has information under the headings: What is it? What's in it? How can I use it? and Product format (see Figure E-4). The description of content is brief—for example, the user is not informed as to whether the data pertain to value, tonnage of shipments, or some other metric. "Product format" is listed, not as a CD-ROM, but as data that are directly accessible on the BTS web site. The data are in fact accessible through the National Transportation Data Archive section of the site, at which location they are searchable by state and commodity code. The data are also available on a CD-ROM, but the data set description that is linked to the "Products" section of the web site no longer mentions the CD-ROM product. (An earlier description advertised the availability of the CD-ROM but did not mention the direct availability of the data on the BTS web site.)